

MANDATORY UNIFORMS

Background

Over the past several years, many parents and community members have urged the district to adopt a mandatory uniform policy as a means of enhancing and improving the learning environment. In evaluating voluntary programs, the district found that use of school uniforms improved the learning environment, bridged socio-economic differences between children, promoted good behavior, improved children's perceptions of themselves as students, and produced cost savings for participating families. Schools with greater compliance levels tended to enjoy commensurately better results.

Pursuant to Education Code 35183, the Board has determined that a mandatory uniform policy is an essential element in providing for the health and safety of K-8 students.

Statement of Policy

All elementary and middle schools in the El Rancho Unified School District shall implement, within the parameters set forth below, the mandatory uniform policy beginning October 25, 1996. (The term "school" herein shall mean all elementary and middle schools.)

All participating schools will adhere to the basic uniform color scheme of navy-blue and white, and blue plaid. Programs for financial assistance will be offered by the local school, following general guidelines developed by the district. The district will develop the mandatory uniform policy in conjunction with the Uniform Advisory Committee.

For each of the first three years of the mandatory uniform program, the District will comprehensively assess the policy, modifying it as appropriate.

Legal Reference:

- EDUCATION CODE
- 35183 School dress codes; uniforms
- 48907 Student Exercise of free expression
- 49066 Grades; effect of physical education class apparel
- CODE OF REGULATIONS, TITLE 5
- 302 Pupils to be neat and clean on entering school
- Hartzell v. Connell (1984) 35 Cal. 3d 899
- Arcadia Unified School District v. California Department of Education, 92 Daily Journal, D.A.R. 3578

MANDATORY UNIFORMS**Commencement of Uniform Policy**

The mandatory uniform policy shall be effective on October 25, 1996.

Information Dissemination

1. It is the responsibility of district and school support staffs to adequately communicate to parents, information common to all school sites, including general guidelines for enforcement of the uniform policy. District administrators shall also work with schools to facilitate implementation of financial assistance programs.
2. Each school shall communicate to parents information regarding the following:
 - a. types and colors of uniform;
 - b. requirements for jackets/outer garments;
 - c. optional articles of attire, if any, e.g., bows-shoes, ties
 - d. compliance measures to be employed;
 - e. the availability of financial support and the procedures for applying for assistance;
 - f. methods to facilitate recycling of uniforms within the school community;
 - g. notice of uniform sales and lists of competitive prices from vendors of uniform articles.
3. The means by which this information is communicated shall include one or more of the following:
 - a. District bulletins;
 - b. school newsletters;
 - c. parent forums;
 - d. PTA meetings and newsletters;
 - e. parent advisory meetings;
 - f. television, radio, and/or newspaper announcements;
 - g. posters displayed at school and in the community;
 - h. registration materials.

MANDATORY UNIFORMS (continued)

Financial Considerations

1. No student shall be denied attendance at school, penalized, or otherwise subjected to compliance measures for failing to wear a uniform by reason of financial hardship.
2. With the commencement of the 1996/97 school year, each school shall:
 - a. designate a specific staff member or school volunteer to assist those families in need of assistance; and
 - b. prepare a flyer describing in detail the uniform and listing the range of costs for each competitively priced item of clothing as provided by a variety of vendors. The flyer shall state that in case of severe financial hardship, parents may contact their child's school by phone, mail or in person to request assistance.
3. The District will suggest forms and types of financial assistance which may be appropriate. Local schools may devise additional forms and/or types of aid.

In order to support the families in need of assistance, the local parent groups of each school will secure donations from local businesses and vendors. Each school will facilitate the recycling of uniforms within the school community using methods such as uniform swap meets, trading of uniforms, and donations of used uniforms.

The following process for compliance with the uniform policy will be offered to families in need of assistance.

- a. Each school will grant a temporary exemption with a parent initiated request for assistance.
 - b. Each school will provide general information of business resources regarding layaways or other payment plans, and local vendors willing to assist families in need.
 - c. Each school will provide used uniforms when needed.
4. Each school shall work with staff, the local school community and business partners to identify resources for assisting families.
 5. The District shall compile and maintain a list of community agencies, uniform retailers, organizations and individuals willing to assist families in need. The District shall also promulgate procedures to link identified resources with participating schools.

MANDATORY UNIFORMS (continued)**Compliance Measures**

1. If necessary, disciplinary action may be taken to encourage compliance with the policy. Since the intent of the policy is not to inhibit or prohibit any student who is not in uniform from receiving the education to which he/she is entitled, no student shall be suspended from class or from school, expelled from school, or receive a lowered academic grade as a result of not complying with the policy.
2. Each school shall develop incentives and positive reinforcement measures to encourage full compliance with the uniform policy. Each school should strive to achieve full compliance through use of incentives and positive reinforcement measures. In addition, schools shall communicate with parents so that expectations, rationale, and benefits are fully understood by the student and his/her family.
3. In order to assure that the uniform policy is administered consistently across the district, the following compliance procedures shall be followed:
 - a. If a student is not complying with the uniform policy, the designated administrator will contact the student's parent or guardian to inform him/her of the uniform policy. The administrator will provide the parent with a copy of the Required Annual Notice to be signed by the parent and filed in the school office.
 - b. If a student is not complying with the uniform policy, and the student's parent or guardian refuses to comply with said policy, the administrator will explain the exemption procedure and ask the parent to sign an exemption form. If a parent or guardian refuses to sign said exemption, the administrator will document the parent's position and file it in the school office.
 - c. If a student is not complying with the uniform policy, but the parent approves said policy, the administrator will notify the student's parent by phone and/or in writing of the violation.

If violation continues, a parent conference will be held with the site administrator. The school discipline plan addressing defiance will be discussed and followed.
 - d. If a student is not complying with the uniform policy, and the student's parent or guardian claims economic hardship, the financial assistance procedures will be followed.
4. The school should resort to disciplinary action only when positive measures fail to ensure compliance. Prior to initiating any disciplinary action a conference with the parent must be held with a school administrator or counselor to solicit parental cooperation and support.

MANDATORY UNIFORMS (continued)

5. Disciplinary action is to be initiated only after all other means to secure support and cooperation as mentioned above have not succeeded. A "progressive discipline" approach is to be employed by the school support staff so as to encourage full and consistent compliance with the least amount of disciplinary action. The same disciplinary actions applied to enforce other school and district rules may be utilized, with the exceptions.
6. In order to ensure a smooth transition to the mandatory uniform policy, and in order to ensure that incentive and positive reinforcement measures are employed before resorting to disciplinary action, no school shall take disciplinary action until after November 14, 1996 unless those not in compliance materially or substantially interfere with the requirements of appropriate discipline.
7. No student shall be considered noncompliant with the policy in the following instances:
 - a. When noncompliance derives from financial hardship.
 - b. When a student wears a button, armband or other accouterment to exercise the right to freedom of expression as provided by Education Code 48907, unless the button, armband or other accouterment signifies or is related to gangs, gang membership or gang activity as provided in Education Code 35183.
 - c. When a student wears the uniform of a nationally recognized youth organization such as the Boy Scouts or the Girl Scouts on regular meeting days.
 - d. When wearing a school uniform violates a student's religious beliefs.
 - e. When a student's parent or guardian has secured an exemption from the uniform policy by following the procedures set forth in paragraph 8 below.
8. If the parent(s) or guardian desires to exempt his or her child from the uniform policy, the parent(s) or guardian must observe the following procedure:
 - a. Request by mail or in person an Application for Exemption from Uniform Program ("Application"). The parent(s) or guardian may obtain an Application at the student's school site.
 - b. Complete the Application in full and submit it to the designated administrator for uniform program exemptions at the student's school.

MANDATORY UNIFORMS (continued)

- c. Meet with the designated administrator to discuss the uniform policy and the nature of the parent(s) or guardian's objections to the policy. The purpose of this meeting include: (1) ensuring that the parent(s) or guardian understands the reasons for, and goals of the uniform policy; (2) verifying the accuracy of the information on the Application; (3) preventing fraud or misrepresentation.
- d. For purposes of consistent administration of the uniform policy, meet with a designated district administrator to discuss the nature of the parent(s) or guardian's objections to the policy.

Annual Evaluation

- 1. All schools will participate in an evaluation at the end of each school year for the first three years of the mandatory uniform program.
- 2. The District shall design an evaluation for districtwide use. Each school shall complete its respective evaluation by May 1 of each year. The school and the District shall review the results of the evaluations and the District shall consider proposed modifications to the uniform policy as appropriate.

EL RANCHO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

APPLICATION FOR EXEMPTION FROM UNIFORM PROGRAM

Name of person submitting this application: _____

Name of student (one per form): _____

Address: _____ Telephone: _____

School: _____ Grade: _____ School Yr: _____

I certify that I am the parent or legal guardian of the student named above. I choose not to have my child named above comply with the student uniform policy adopted by the El Rancho Unified School District Board of Education. I hereby request an exemption from the student uniform requirement on behalf of the above named student for the current school year at the above-referenced school. I understand that this exemption is for the **current school year only**. I understand that if my child does not wear a uniform, he/she must comply with the district dress code.

The reason for my application for this exemption is as follows:

Signature of Parent/Guardian

Date

Signature of School Administrator

Date of Conference (if applicable)

DISTRITO ESCOLAR UNIFICADO EL RANCHO

APLICACION PARA EXCEPCION DEL UNIFORME ESCOLAR

Nombre de la persona
sometiendo esta solicitud de excepción: _____

Nombre del estudiante (uno por solicitud): _____

Domicilio: _____ Teléfono: _____

Escuela: _____ Grado: _____ Año Escolar: _____

Yo certifico que soy el padre o guardián legal del estudiante nombrado arriba. Yo escojo que mi hijo nombrado arriba no cumpla con la póliza de uniforme estudiantil adoptada por la Mesa Educativa del Distrito Escolar Unificado El Rancho. Por lo tanto yo pido una excepción del requisito de uniforme estudiantil a favor del estudiante nombrado arriba por el año escolar vigente en la escuela aludida arriba. Yo entiendo que esta excepción es para el año escolar vigente unicamente. Yo entiendo que si mi hijo/a no usa un uniforme, el/ella debe de obedecer el codigo de vestir del distrito.

La razón por mi aplicación para esta excepción es la que sigue:

Firma del Padre/Guardián

Fecha

Firma del Administrador/a Escolar

Fecha de la Conferencia
(si es aplicable)